

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SR-02 ORM-03 SCA-01 DRC-01 /117 W

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R 242211Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 414

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

US MISSION USUN NEW YORK 905

CONFIDENTIAL SANTIAGO 5808

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINS, PINT

SUBJECT: RELEASE OF DETAINEES

REF: SANTIAGO 5748

1. SUMMARY: MINISTRY INTERIOR STATEMENT SEPT 23 DENIED PRESS
SPECULATION OF IMPENDING "MASSIVE RELEASE" OF CHILEAN DETAINEES,
NOTING EACH DETAINEE WILL BE RELEASED ONLY AFTER CAREFUL INVESTIGATION

TO INSURE HE WILL NOT BECOME A THREAT TO INTERNAL SECURITY IN CHILE.
EXEC SEC OF CHILEAN COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES SAMUEL NALEGACH IS
QUOTED TO EFFECT THAT GOC WILL RELEASE "MAJORITY" OF DETAINEES.
HE USED FIGURE OF 2,000 PERSONS (CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN HALF OF
TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS WE BELIEVE UNDER DETENTION), OF WHOM 1500
WOULD REMAIN IN CHILE AND 500 WOULD BE EXILED. PINOCHET,
MEANWHILE, ISSUED ANOTHER PROPAGANDA BLAST AT "GUILTY SILENCE" OF
CUBA/SOVIET UNION ON PRISONER RELEASE QUESTION. END SUMMARY.

2. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR ISSUED STATEMENT SEPT 23 REFERRING TO
PRESS REPORTS OF IMMINENT RELEASE OF 270 CHILEAN DETAINEES (REFTEL).
STATEMENT NOTED THAT GOC HAS ALWAYS SOUGHT RAPID INVESTIGATION
OF BACKGROUND OF ALL DETAINEES; THAT PERSONS DETERMINED ON
BASIS OF THIS INVESTIGATION NOT TO CONSTITUTE A THREAT TO PUBLIC
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SAFETY HAVE BEEN RELEASED "ALMOST DAILY"; THAT IN RESPONSE TO

CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL PINOCHET STATEMENT SEPT 11 ON RELEASE OF DETAINEES "AN EXHAUSTIVE AND ACCELERATED INVESTIGATION OF ALL DETAINEES IS PRESENTLY UNDERWAY"; THAT EACH CASE REQUIRES "COMPLETE AND EXTENSIVE STUDY" HOWEVER, TO VERIFY THAT PERSONS IF RELEASED, WILL NOT CONSTITUTE SECURITY DANGER TO REST OF POPULATION; AND THAT CONSEQUENTLY THERE WILL BE NO "MASSIVE RELEASES" OF DETAINEES AS REPORTED BY PRESS. STATEMENT CONCLUDED WITH SHARP REMINDER THAT ONLY MINISTRY OF INTERIOR WILL DETERMINE WHO WILL BE RELEASED AND UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES.

3. PROTESTANT PASTOR SAMUEL NALEGACH, EXEC SEC OF CHILEAN COMMITTEE FOR REGUGEES, IS QUOTED IN AP INTERVIEW AS STATING GOC PLANS TO RELASE "MAJORITY" OF DETAINEES EXCEPT FOR "THE BIG FISH" OF ALLENDE ERA -- APPARENT REFERENCE TO "DAWSON ISLAND" GROUP. NALEGACH USED FIGURE OF 2,000 PERSONS WHO WILL BE FREED, OF WHOM 1500 WILL REMAIN IN CHILE AND 500 WILL BE EXILED. HE CLAIMED FIRST GROUP OF 40 PERSONS IS NOW READY TO LEAVE FOR ARGENTINA, BUT NOTED PRINCIPAL PROBLEM FACING AGENCIES INVOLVED IN RELEASE OF CHILEAN DETAINEES IS FINDING RECEIVING COUNTRIES FOR THOSE WHO WILL BE EXILED.

4. GENERAL PINOCHET, MEANWHILE, VIA JUNTA SPOKESMAN WILLOUGHBY, ISSUED PUBLIC BLAST AT "GUILTY SILENCE" OF SOVIET UNION AND CUBA IN FACE OF CHILEAN CHALLENGE TO THEM TO RELEASE THEIR OWN POLITICAL PRISONERS. PINOCHET NOTED DAILY RECEIPT OF "HUNDREDS" OF MESSAGES FROM FAMILY MEMBERS OF THESE PRISONERS, AND IMPLIED GOC WOULD PRESENT THEM TO WORLD IN SUCH FORUMS AS UN AND OAS AS "PROOF" OF HYPROCISY OF THESE REGIMES ON HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS.

5. COMMENT: THERE ARE CONSIDERABLY MORE THAN 2,000 PERSONS UNDER DETENTION IN CHILE, PERHAPS UP TO 6,000 OR EVEN MORE. NALEGACH'S COMMENT ON DIFFICULTY OF PLACING EXILES CONFIRMS OTHER INFORMATION WE HAVE HEARD FROM ADMIRAL MERINO AND EUROPEAN DIPLOMATIC SOURCES HERE (REFTEL).

6. MINISTRY OF INTERIOR STATEMENT MAY BE INTENDED TO REASSURE STRONG SUPPORTERS OF REGIME THAT RELEASES WILL NOT BE SUCH AS TO INCREASE INTERNAL SECURITY RISKS, AND ALSO TO UNDERCUT SERIES OF UNOFFICIAL NEWS STORIES ON THIS SUBJECT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRISONERS RELEASE, POLITICAL PRISONERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SANTIA05808
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740269-0322
From: SANTIAGO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740918/aaaaapky.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: SANTIAGO 5748
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 JUN 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <11 MAR 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RELEASE OF DETAINEES
TAGS: PINS, PINT, CI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005